NIH eRA Partnership Program
Participant Package

What is the NIH eRA eCGAP electronic grant submission program?

NIH has begun offering open access for electronic submission of *select* competitive grant applications since January 11, 2005. For the receipt date of June 1, 2005, and later, NIH will accept electronic submission of new, competing continuation and revised grants for *only* the R01, R03 and R21 mechanisms that have modular budgets (less than $250,000). For the first time, NIH will accept consortia/subcontracts in modular budgets

The electronic Competitive Grant Application Process (eCGAP) works as a system-to-system transaction originating from a service provider, who provides a system in which to enter the appropriate information and upload documents and then converts them into the proper electronic format to send to the NIH. We are currently only working with six service providers. Eventually we will add more service providers. Also, institutions will be able to be their own service provider as long as their systems can be certified as compliant. In the future, grant submissions will be able to be sent through Grants.gov, the government wide portal for grant information and submission.

How can I submit my grant application electronically?

o   You can contact one of the Service Providers (see below) to submit your grant application electronically for the June 1 and July 1 receipt dates or later.

o   You can, as an institution, work with NIH to develop a system to system interface with NIH that will allow you to submit an application directly to NIH.

o   You will eventually be able to submit an application to NIH through Grants.gov. NIH is currently in the process of developing a system-to-system interface with

Grants.gov, with the goal of accepting select grant applications live through Grants.gov in the fall of 2005.

Who are the authorized Service Providers?

Six external service providers provide a system to external researchers in which to enter the appropriate grant application information and upload documents and then convert them into the proper electronic format to send to NIH.

The role of a service provider is to:

Develop operational software to prepare and submit e-grant applications.

Deliver applications in standard XML stream to the NIH

Receive and distribute NIH receipt acknowledgements and other messages to grantees/applicants

Assist in the submission of e-applications.

Contact any of these Service Providers to submit your grant application electronically:

Authorized Companies & Products

Product	URL
GrantSlam from Cayuse, Inc.	Company URL: http://www.cayuse.com/
HealthProposal.net from Clinical Tools	Product URL: http://www.healthproposal.net Company URL: http://www.clinicaltools.com
Grant Application and Management Systems (GAMS) from eRA Software Systems	Product URL: http://www.gams.org/
Formatta Corp	Company URL: http://www.formatta.com/
InfoEd International	Company URL: http://www.infoed.org/
Research & Management Systems (RAMS)	Company URL: http://www.ramscompany.com/

For information about a specific Service Provider, see http://era.nih.gov/areas/com/SBIR_Awarded.pdf

When is the next receipt date and when is the submission deadline?

The current round (referred to as the June/July timeframe) is for applications for the September/October 2005 Council Round. Receipt deadlines are:

- June 1, 2005 for new applications.

- July 1, 2005 for revisions and competing continuations

What types of applications can I submit for the June/July timeframe?

For this round, NIH will accept electronic submissions for *only* R01, R03, and R21 grant mechanisms that have modular budgets (with or without consortia/subcontracts). For new applications, Principal Investigators are encouraged to discuss their application with the NIH to determine its probability of being assigned as one of these mechanisms.

Descriptions of applications for these mechanisms are found at the links below:

* R01 http://www.csr.nih.gov/guidelines/R01.htm

* R03 NIH Small Grant Program http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/r03.htm

* R21NIH Exploratory/Developmental Research Grant Award
http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/r21.htm

Other points to note:

* One appendix document can be sent with the electronic application.

* NIH will accept applications that are in response to Program Announcements (PAs) and Requests for Applications (RFAs) if they are for the submission dates of June 1 and later.

* NIH will *not* accept submissions for R03 Fogarty awards.

* NIH will *not* accept electronic submissions for *any* other kinds of applications, including: Applications with Subprojects, Program Project and Center grants, Supplements, Research Career Awards, SBIRs, STTRs, Training grants, Fellowships, and AREA grants.

* NIH will *also not* accept electronic submissions that represent a Principal Investigator Change of Institution, or a Change of PI.

* Full Budget applications are still under pilot. A Service Provider will be able to submit up to 10 for the June 1 receipt date.

What are the differences between paper and electronic grants submission?

There may be slight format differences in the grant image of your application as compared to the paper application. For example, some of the sections will have page breaks between them that are not typical of paper applications. The review of your application will not be negatively affected in any way by these differences. The Scientific Review Administrator (SRA) is aware that the application was submitted electronically. The content of the proposal will not be affected. If you notice an error in the application PDF that is due to the electronic processing, please alert your Service Provider. The Service Provider is in contact with NIH to resolve system problems.

The assigned reviewers and readers for eCGAP applications will receive paper copies of the application just as they receive the paper copies of applications submitted in the traditional way. In addition, all members of the review group who do not have a conflict of interest will be able to see the image of the application on a CD ROM. These images are of higher quality than those from the scanning of applications submitted in paper. Any figures presented in color will retain that color on the CD ROM which is not true for applications submitted in paper. Therefore, in one sense the eCGAP applications will have an advantage over

traditional paper submissions. Finally, the reviewers will receive an explanation of the minor format differences of eCGAP and paper applications.

How do I get a Commons Profile?

Principal Investigators should make sure they have an up-to-date profile on the eRA Commons, and an affiliation with the institution sponsoring the grant application. If they are creating a new profile, they should allow at least a week for NIH to verify the profile before the receipt deadline. The information in the Commons should exactly match the corresponding information in the grant application. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to be sure that the personal data in the Commons is correct and updated.

How do I update my Commons Profile?

Information regarding you Commons Profile is in the Commons User Guide (http://era.nih.gov/commons/). See *Managing Personal Profile Information* (open bookmarks to find this section; double click title).

What font size should I use in my grant submission?

The formatting of electronic applications is based on the NIH guidelines for formatting grant applications used in paper submissions. Applicants should familiarize themselves with these guidelines. http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html. Adherence to these guidelines will result in well-formatted applications. The standard font sizes for applications are Arial 11 and Helvetica 11.

Can I use special characters?

The current NIH rule is to use the Greek character written out like ALPHA in the project title. There are some NIH downstream systems that are not set up to process special characters and until these systems are upgraded, NIH will not accept special characters in the title.

What about appendices?

One appendix can be sent with the electronic application. Send appendices directly to the SRA after the PI receives the Study Section assignment notice from NIH. Send any corrections after verification to the SRA.

Do I have to send a backup paper application?

For the June/July timeframe, no backup paper applications are necessary at submission. The submission will be electronic only. However, applicants have the opportunity to send in paper applications if they review their application on-line and choose to not use the electronic submission.

If both an electronic and print applications are submitted, the paper application will be the document that Receipt and Referral advances through the referral process.

Once PIs are assigned to an SRA, they can then send back-up copies; these copies will be treated as the primary copies. Should there be any differences between the hard-copy back-ups submitted to the SRAs and the initial electronic applications, the differences can be worked out between the PI and the SRA.

How do I verify or reject an electronic application?

The current sources for this process are:
http://era.nih.gov/Projectmgmt/SBIR/CGAP/Applicant_Instructions_01-13-04.pdf and
Commons release notes http://era.nih.gov/Docs/Commons_RN_03_02_2004.pdf.

For you to view and sign off your application on-line, you need to do the following:

- Make sure you can log on to the NIH eRA Commons.

- Verify your electronic grant application via the NIH eRA Commons.

Here are the instructions for the PI on how to verify in Commons:

1. When you receive the email from NIH, log on at https://commons.era.nih.gov/commons/.

2. Go to "Status" on the Commons tab bar.

3. Select "eApplications".

4. Search under "PI eApplication Status" header for "All" or "Requires Verification".

5. Identify the appropriate application and select "Verify PI" on the right-hand side under the heading "Action".

6. The verification page comes up and the electronic grant application image (PDF) comes up in a separate widow for you to examine, download, and print at your discretion. You do not have to sign off immediately. You can review your application before your sign off.

7. If you are satisfied, close the PDF window and verify that you agree to terms on the verification page of the Commons that will still be displayed.

8. Select "Save".

NOTE: If the PI and SO reject the electronic application and choose to submit paper, then five (5) copies of the application need to be sent directly to CSR. Send a cover letter with the copies explaining that the late submission is due to participation in the eCGAP electronic open access process or pilot. See http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/dates.htm for submission instructions. This link has a mailing label:
http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/labels.pdf

How can you guarantee that my electronic grant submission (and no paper backup) will be acceptable for consideration?

The following letter of assurance was provided by the Center for Scientific Research (CSR).

Dear Investigator:

The Center for Scientific Review (CSR) would like to thank you for considering the option of being an earlier user of the electronic Competitive Grant Application Process (eCGAP) i.e., electronic submission. The development and implementation of this system is a high priority for NIH extramural research and a critical step in our efforts to improve the grant application process and shorten the time from submission to potential award. We appreciate the willingness of "pioneers" to help us bring the eCGAP process to wider use. More information on electronic research administration (eRA) can be found at this site: http://era.nih.gov/.

Some investigators have voiced concern that their application may be somehow disadvantaged by eCGAP. The CSR is committed to preventing this from occurring during the referral and review of these applications. The applications will be assigned to Institutes/Centers for funding consideration and to review groups using the same process as for paper applications. The eCGAP submission incorporates the opportunity to include a cover letter with suggestions for such assignments and discussion of other important information such as identification of critical scientific areas and potential conflicts of interest.

The assigned reviewers and readers for eCGAP applications will receive paper copies of the application just as they receive the paper copies of applications submitted in the traditional way. In addition all members of the review group who do not have a conflict of interest will be able to see the image of the application on a CD ROM. These images are of higher quality than those from the scanning of applications submitted in paper. Any figures presented in color will retain that color on the CD ROM which is not true for applications submitted in paper. Therefore, in one sense the CGAP applications will have an advantage over traditional paper submissions. Finally, the reviewers will receive an explanation (copy attached) of the minor format differences of eCGAP and paper applications.

CSR staff, working with many others in the Office of Extramural Research at NIH, have devoted many hours to the analysis of the processes needed for eCGAP, the planning for the early pilots, and implementation of the system. We are convinced that the checks and business rules built in to the eCGAP system will result in applications that are complete and conform to the requirements for submission. Indeed, the eCGAP process is designed to prevent applicants from making the common errors that can lead to problems in grant submission or delays in review. Our expectation is that this process will result in applications that consistently meet all of the NIH requirements and will allow investigators to concentrate on the scientific aspects that they know best. eCGAP applications submitted in these early pilots will receive careful handling and should unexpected problems arise we will work with investigators and their institutions to correct them so that the review process is not delayed.

Therefore, we hope that you will seriously consider working with the staff in your institution to submit an application using the eCGAP system. Not only will you be helping yourself submit a grant application that conforms to the NIH requirements, you will be doing a service for future scientists and their grant submissions. If you have questions about the logistics of eCGAP submission, please contact your Sponsored Research Office or Scarlett Gibb (301-435-3435 or gibbs@mail.nih.gov) in the Office of Extramural Research. If you have questions about the handling of the applications in CSR, please contact Dr. Suzanne Fisher, Director, Division of Receipt and Referral (301-435-0715; fishers@csr.nih.gov).

Sincerely,

Brent Stanfield, Ph.D.
Acting Director
Center for Scientific Review